

June 22, 2005
Public Hearing- Budget

Minutes

Members present

D.C. Swaim- Chairman
Brady Wooten- Vice- Chairman
Leon Casstevens- Commissioner
Kim Clark Phillips- Commissioner
Allen Sneed- Commissioner

Others Present

Cecil E. Wood- County Manager
Melinda Vestal-Clerk to the Board
James Graham, Attorney

Chairman Swaim called the meeting to order informing everyone that this would be a time for the public to express their thoughts on the proposed budget; it would not be an answer and question session. Commissioner Sneed had the invocation.

Budget 2005/2006

Mr. Wood reviewed the budget process. Mr. Wood discussed the contract with Hoots Hospital and the creation of the Yadkin Health Alliance. There was discussion of the needs for the county: schools, 2% COLA, economic development, infrastructure, water and sewer. Yadkin County has to be competitive with surrounding counties. Yadkin County is trying to “catch-up”; it takes money to address the needs. The county will generate revenues from the following; \$13,547,759 property taxes, \$6,523,800 sales tax and \$9,938,874 from other sources. Mr. Wood stated that 80% of the budget goes to public safety, schools and human services.

Chairman Swaim opened the public hearing.

Joanne Holcomb, educator, discussed the availability of tax dollars for services and the need to prioritize. She stated the department heads budget per mandates passed down by the state. The citizens of Yadkin County expect the Board of Commissioners to act fairly for all citizens and use the money allocated wisely.

Amy Brown Crump, Boonville, stated she is in agreement to raise taxes. Yadkin County is behind in education. She does not like watching the county get further behind. She stated businesses look at the education system available for their employees and their families. The county needs to take care of the needs and it will not happen with the budget as presented. There is no room for adjustments in this budget.

Ellen Reece, Boonville, stated she is a parent, teacher, farmer and a taxpayer who pays \$2,565 in taxes. She would like the Board to consider increasing the value of farm land and forestry. She commented that 52% of the land in Yadkin County falls under farmland use, so the farmer pays 1% of land taxes. She informed the Board what surrounding counties' values are for this type of land. Yadkin County is losing industry and the companies who do look at Yadkin County, also look at the school system and our system needs improvements. She encouraged the Board to make an investment in the county and raise taxes.

Julie Norman, Yadkinville, stated she has two children in Yadkin County schools. The teachers provide the best education with the resources provided to them and delaying the improvements for our schools will only fail our children. The children deserve the best education possible. If the county provides better schools, then better businesses will come. Yadkin County needs to be competitive with surrounding counties. She encouraged the Board to move forward and fund the schools.

Bradley Hardy, student at Forbush High School, stated teachers are under paid and under appreciated, but they will continue to teach. Being average is not acceptable. Forbush student have spoken out before and were criticized. The county has poor buildings with trailers sitting out front of the schools. These trailers are a reflection of where the county puts its priorities and it is not education. He stated politicians flip-flop on issues depending on how it will affect their political career. He urged the Commissioners to take a stand and be leaders. We, the students, do not want to be average – we want to be excellent.

Gene Pardue, Jonesville, discussed reval and the 5-D Project. He also commented he is not against the schools.

Peggy Boose, Boonville, discussed the budget and tax revenues. She commented there are many needs in the budget but the financials of May 31 showed some departments below their budgets. She talked about raises for county employees and how they should be the same across the board. She also suggested the county buy used vehicles, cut out overtime and offer incentives to the employees. She stated that Yadkin County cannot be compared to other counties. The salaries for employees as compared to other Tier 3 counties are competitive. If the employees want higher salaries, she suggested they commute. She encouraged the Board to look at all citizens who pay taxes. There has already been an increase in taxes due to reval. She asked why are we fighting over money? She asked the Board to do what is best for everybody.

Jeff Wallace, Forbush Principal, stated he is a parent and taxpayer and has two children in the school system. He appreciates the work of the Board and thanked those who have visited Forbush High School. He currently has nine mobile units and is requesting two more. The incoming class of freshmen will be 300 plus students. He is converting a locker room and an administrator's office to accommodate a teacher for ROTC. He stated 80% of his students are on grade level or higher making Forbush High School a school of distinction. He credits this to his teaching staff and students. The area where

students did score low was in science; due to inadequate facilities. The students do not have the opportunity to have hands on experience. If new labs are built they can only score higher. He encouraged the Board to accommodate the needs of the schools. He thanked the Board for what they do.

John Vernon, Boonville, commented that Mr. Wood's comments on the budget should have been directed to the Board. There is no arguing with the comments Mr. Wood made about the budget. Where can the county save money? Mr. Vernon complimented Ms. Reece and her capabilities and her dedication to teach our children. He does not agree with not raising taxes. He suggested raising taxes substantially, fund the Sheriff's office and fund EMS. We do not need a revenue neutral budget. The Board's continuation of split voting shows a lack of ineffective leadership. He suggested the Board raise taxes. Good county government shows good leadership; raise taxes, invest wisely.

Stuart Haynes, EMS, stated he has been an employee of the county for 18 years and a business owner with 100 employees. He stated no one likes to pay taxes. The county needs to build some infrastructure, take some of the burden off the taxpayers. The county is operating on the bare minimum. The citizens do not mind paying higher taxes if they have representation and services.

Jessica Cowan, Forbush student, talked about the mobile units. She stated that students who have classes in the mobile units are sicker due to walking back and forth with no coverage from the building to the mobile units. She pleaded with the Board to remove the mobile units.

Edith Davis, Yadkinville, thanked the Board for approving the plaque honoring the Daniels, but she wanted to apologize to Commissioner Sneed for the harsh words spoken to him. Yadkin County is blessed with beautiful land, hardworking wonderful people and our special gift- children. There has been lots of talk about the needs of the schools. We have teachers that are positive and professional. Ms. Davis believes the Board will do the right thing. We need to keep our teachers in Yadkin County. Building these labs will not only help the student but also the teachers.

Debbie Gough, East Bend Principal, stated she went off to college she was behind her fellow classmates due to the lack of facilities. Our children need the exposure. We should not settle for average but stride for excellence.

Lloyd Davis, East Bend, commended those who spoke tonight. The Board has some big decisions to make and not everyone will be happy with the final result. He stated the Sheriff's office and EMS has the best employees dedicated to this county. The county is also fortunate to have dedicated employees. It is really tough being a commissioner. He suggested the Board make the right choice for all the citizens, not on promises made to a few.

Brock Matthews, School Board member, discussed the school's budget and the cuts in operating expenses. We have used the fund balance in the past to balance our budget.

With the proposed cuts, personnel and programs will have to be cut. He asked the Board to support the total amount requested by the Board of Education. He asked the Board if they wanted to be the only county in the state to cut essential programs and personnel?

Sheriff Cain stated we don't always understand what each department faces, but as far as my department, this budget will not work. The proposed budget cuts four deputies out of my department. We currently answer over 100 calls a day with 2 deputies on the road during the day and 3 deputies covering the county at night, court is held five days a week and the jail is to capacity. The officers cut will be the SROs. The minimum response time from Yadkinville to East Bend is 18 minutes. We have cases backlogged. Sheriff Cain stated he does not want to cut the SROs nor the DARE and CARE Programs. Sheriff Cain spoke to Mr. Pardue and Dr. Hazel Brown, who taught him in school, telling them how much he appreciated them.

Lloyd Pardue, retired educator, stated Yadkin County needs infrastructure. He commented he is willing to pay more taxes for better schools and infrastructure. He urged the Board to do the right thing.

Tom Helms, Detective, Sheriff's Office, stated he was an SRO for 6 years. These officers are very important to have in the schools. He was not sure if anything he said would matter but, he felt he had to speak. Why does it take something bad to wake people up? People do not want pay for the services until they need them and then it's too late. Mr. Helms commended the Sheriff, the Captain and the Major on their work ethics and how they keep the office running.

Mike Reavis, Health Director, stated he is very proud of his employees. He lost six positions in previous cuts but the staff did their best to maintain the level of services. His budget stayed the same for county appropriations as last year. He urged the Board to move forward keeping the services at the appropriate level for the citizens of Yadkin County.

James Robinson, SRO, stated he is a school resource officer at Yadkinville Elementary, the Alternative School and Forbush Elementary and has worked for the Sheriff five years. He has always worked the best he could with what was available to him. He told the Board they could explain to his family why he will no longer have a job.

Shane Shore, Deputy, stated he works as hard as he can for the citizens of Yadkin County. He urged the Board to make the necessary changes and raise taxes. He challenged the Board to ride with him and see what he does or go to that classroom and watch a teacher.

Eric Ball, Detective, stated he has been with the Sheriff for 6 years and is now in narcotics. He stated due to the lack of funds he cannot obtain the training he needs. He urged the Board to raise taxes and fund the Sheriff, EMS and other departments.

Darryl Thornton, Deputy, stated that most days there are two deputies covering the county. He stated when someone is arrested it takes 1 to 1 ½ hours to process the paperwork leaving the other deputy by himself. He urged the Board to raise taxes.

Howard Ball stated he has mixed emotions about the situation. He questioned why the BOE has not asked for money in previous years. He commented on the articles in the papers and stated they are not good publicity for neither the commissioner nor the county. He agreed there have been some valid comments made tonight. The county needs to work together. The high schools were built in 1969. The county needs to maintain the facilities and if takes raising taxes, then so be it.

Ricky McCollum, retired educator, stated the Board of Education has asked for money in the past. He stated there were mobile units purchased in 1977 and there are still mobile units being used today. He is willing to pay higher taxes. He informed the Board that 90% of the students who graduate from Yadkin County schools do not stay in the county. He would like Yadkin County to start somewhere.

Chairman Swaim closed the public hearing.

***Commissioner Sneed called the vote on the EMS budget amendment back to the table. Commissioner Casstevens seconded. The Board voted 5-0.**

Description	Account Number	Original Budget	Increase/(Decrease)	Amend
Salary Full-time	1054330-51030	\$1,097,763.00	\$126,000.00	\$1,223,763.00
Social Security	1054330-51300	\$80,169.00	\$9,068.00	\$89,237.00
Medicare	1054330-51310	\$18,286.00	\$2,603.00	\$20,889.00
Retirement	1054330-51330	\$64,982.00	\$8,540.00	\$73,522.00
401K	1054330-51360	\$10,780.00	\$1,490.00	\$12,270.00
Appropriated Fund Balance	1044000-49000	\$652,000.00	\$147,701.00	\$799,701.00

Budget amendment required for transfer of money to pay EMS salaries under the 2004/2005 fiscal budget year. EMS submitted the budget to the County Manager in May 2004 which included a 5% COLA. The County Commissioners approved a 3% COLA and the new budget was adopted. The approved budget for 2004-2005 was sent to the Personnel Department for corrections. Upon receiving our copy of the revised budget in August 2004, it was discovered that the full time salaries had not been calculated correctly.

Commissioner Casstevens stated he would like for the people to consider a bond. He appreciated everyone coming out to speak. He stated there is no extra money and the Board does not always vote 3-2.

The Board set a budget session for Monday, June 27th at 7:00.

The Board agreed to change the first Monday meeting to Tuesday, July 5th due to the July 4th holiday.

Mr. Wood reminded the Board that Graham Fields from Senator Dole's office would be here Thursday.

Recess

***Commissioner Wooten made the motion to recess the meeting until Monday, June 27th. Commissioner Sneed seconded. The Board voted 5-0.**

Melinda Vestal, Clerk to the Board